

Beyond what's known

by DragonLovingGirl6

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Summary: Armin dreams of seeing the outside world, but he is still a lot of strength and hundreds of answers short to fulfill that dream. But when he manages to capture himself an unusual titan he might just have brought humanity one step closer to hope. AU with HTTYD storyline, Titan!Eren.

1. Titan alert and Armin Arlert

****AAARRRRGGG!** Hanji is so hard to write since they are gender neutral! (Don't wanna anger the hard core fans too much.) And I think there are still some mistakes in there!**

****Also,** some characters will not appear in this story in their human forms because they were confirmed as titan shifters. So spoilers!**

****Titan alert and Armin Arlert****

This is Trost. It's barely 10 meters away from being eaten alive and a few kilometers away from a little safer. It's located solemnly on the edge of despair. My home for the last few years and in one word: Sturdy. It's been here for over a hundred years and nothing is particularly new. We have some emergency farming, lots of training and because of those freakin' walls a horrible view of the sunsets. But the worst problem is the plagues. While places further towards the interior have rats or cockroaches (and believe me, I'd rather have those) we have€|Titans.

'Damn it damn it damn it!' I was repeating that over and over in my head as I tried to get my boots on. Outside it was chaos, people running around or flying all over the place with 3D Maneuvering Gear, citizens being evacuated just in case. I myself was trying to get outside but my head was still too groggy to function normally. Better snap out of it as soon as possible, I had to prove myself after all.

Finally, after tripping over my own legs at least 3 times, I had my boots on and was running out. Quickly I started making my way over to the stables, swaying between the people and trying to get there as fast as possible. I finally was able to get out of the crowds and rounded a corner—only to dodge a huge foot just in time.

I jerked my head up trying to see the face of the 7 meter tall behemoth. It looked a little taken off guard by my appearance, but it recovered soon enough and started reaching down towards me. I was frozen in place with awe and fear. Suddenly I was jerked away, knocking the air from my lungs, and swiftly dragged upwards.

I immediately started struggling to get free only for an irritated "Damn it Armin, keep still!" To be yelled in my ears. I relaxed as soon as I heard his voice. Not my first choice for a savior, but a lot better than a titan in my opinion. A joyful whooping and the sound of blades tearing through flesh told me that my attacker had been taken care of.

It took the over-excited, bespectacled squad leader only a millisecond to pull up next to us. "Wow, Armin, that was a close one!" They cried out excitedly. I nodded at them. "Captain Hanji, Captain Levi." I greeted, slamming my right hand over my chest in the best salute I could manage while being held. "Tsk, leave the saluting to the soldiers, scrawny brat." The permanently sour faced captain mumbled under his breath. I heard though.

I decided to just shrug the comment off. After all, I knew by now that Levi rarely really insulted people on purpose, it 's just his way of talking.

Within seconds I was standing again, facing two elite soldiers, one of them looking—bored, I guess—and the other the complete opposite. "Armin! Did you get to see its face? What did it look like? Did it react to you in any way?" After four years I should have gotten used to the scientist's interrogations, but just the way they would suddenly get in your face, it still threw me through the loop every time. Well, at least it didn't make me yelp and freak out every time anymore. "Uhm, when I came around the corner it looked surprised for a-." "See, Levi? See?! I told you, they are starting to react! If only I could catch me one of those! To bad I killed it back there! Maybe that one might have been able to react to my attempts to talk to it! Who knows what we might discover!" Levi gave a sigh and turned towards me. I turned to face him too, Hanji was probably talking more to herself now anyway.

"What in the actual fuck do you think you are doing here anyway, on foot no less?" He wondered. I didn't want to tell him the truth, but I didn't have a good excuse yet. Nonetheless, I opened my mouth anyway. After all, if I knew Levi well enough—

"Never mind, I don't want to hear it. Right now we have a more important things to focus on." Yep, works every time.

"Hanji, you bring blonde here back to the refill station, I'll handle things here." Levi didn't stay to hear Hanji's "Ow, come on!" and flew off to help some soldiers that were having trouble bringing down a 15 meter class. As soon as she realized Levi either hadn't heard or didn't want to, Hanji heaved a sigh and turned towards me. "Well,

better get this over with, the faster you're safe the faster I can come back here." Even before those words had properly left her mouth she picked me up under her arm and flew off. I was a little offended by the way she said that, but then again, Hanji was never one to really consider others' feelings when the opportunity to study titans was involved.

After a few minutes of swinging around and dodging some grabby titan hands (Hanji released joyful whoops every time she narrowly escaped them) we arrived at Trost's HQ, better known as the Refill Station to the people that fought here on a daily basis. This is where soldiers went when they were out of gas or blades or were wounded. At least, if they could make it.

Hanji put me down and accepted when people offered to refill her gas and blades. I just mumbled a quick thanks to her and went to my station. Most of the kids here had already ended their basic training, in a few weeks we could choose a branch to work in and do a test to see if we could handle it. But for now, we helped around here. My post: Refilling gas tanks.

There weren't that many kids at my post, after all our only busy moment was if people went faster through the reserves than normal. All in all it was a nice and peaceful job, as long as you ignored the yells and roars outside. "Hey." I greeted the only other kid working there. Christa, a blond girl that was a head shorter than me, the gentlest soul you'll ever find and still better at fighting than me. Hell she even placed for the top ten. "Hi Armin. I saw you being brought in by Captain Hanji, are you hurt?" Worried and considerate as always, it was really no wonder she was my only not really friend but she came the closest.

"Nah, I'm okay. I was just trying to get here on foot but then they swooped me up and brought me here." Christa put up her sternest face (which could actually be quite impressive if she was really serious) as she scolded me. "Armin, it's dangerous on the ground! The only way to outrun a titan is by horse or with the 3DMG!"

I sighed: "Yeah yeah, I know." As I sat down next to her and connected one of the smaller tanks to the larger containers and turned the tab open. Christa quickly dropped the subject and unhooked her tank, which was full by now. All in all this job was boring, believe me. There were also some other posts. Like for instance, there was a post where the swords were kept. The people working there had to get the blades and put them into empty slots of hasty soldiers.

The two teens that I knew best working there were Sasha and Connie, and I swear to the Walls, I wondered what idiot put those two in charge of the swords. I looked up and cringed as I saw those two holding a mock swordfight, two blades in each hand. Sorry I'm putting it like this but, those idiots! Didn't they know that those swords weren't supposed to be used like that? If they continued they were going to- ow, too late, they broke one. Well, at least it was now and not later on the battlefield.

And then there were the people that went to bring around gas tanks and blades to people out there, that was the most exciting job of all, closest to the action. This was a pretty recent post ever since they found out a lot more soldiers survived that way. But only the

fastest, strongest and most skilled trainees got to do that. In other words those were Jean and-.

I looked up at a whooshing sound, music to the ears of everyone who heard it. But those who knew that sound knew that that sound was that of the most silent, deadly, talented and gorgeous girl that the trainee barracks of Trost had ever witnessed.

Mikasa Ackerman.

Now don't get me wrong, I didn't have an eye on Mikasa, though most of the guys and mostly Jean did. I rather idolized her. She had come out as the number one in training and gained the best score a female trainee ever had since Hanji herself. She could out best even the Elites and was the only trainee with a kill streak. Last time I checked it was 11 but by now it was probably way more.

I desperately wanted to come even close to her level, I really wanted to be useful and strong enough to pull my own weight. Mikasa was close to perfect and a lot of the other trainees had often made an attempt to make her join their 'clique'. But one thing that had always been curious about Mikasa was her wish to join the Recon Corps and she refused any offer to belong with any group. I myself had wanted to join the Recon Corps since I was a little kid and also I was pretty lonely. Maybe, if I could get closer to her and talk without falling silent as she gave me one of her cold, empty glares, maybe we could be alone together. You know, not really talking, but sitting and walking together.

Sadly though, I was too big of a wuss to try and ask, even though I wanted to keep her company she was still scary, especially when she was giving silent glares.

I looked outside as she flew off again. It was almost dark. Titans were more active during the day, when it got darker they became slower. Usually we would be battling them all day and by nightfall they would stop coming in and the ones that were already inside would be easier to kill. As soon as it was dark the Garrison would work hastily to cover up the hole in the wall. That would hold them off for another few days, maybe even a week if we were lucky. So I had to move now, now was the moment!

"Something wrong?" Christa must have noticed me staring outside longingly. I turned back to her with a sigh. I knew what I was going to do and I hated doing it to her. But now was my chance. And it was rather calm at our post, she would be perfectly able to do it on her own.

"It's justâ€¦I have been working on something and if I want to try it out I have to go out there now." Christa's eyes widened. "Armin, you can't do that! It's dangerous out there! The titans are still too active and abnormals are even worse! You could get eaten!" Of course she would try to talk me out of it. Christa would never forcefully make someone do her bidding but she was way too caring to let anyone just run into danger. But I had to get out there, I had to.

"Don't worry, if you're so worried I'll put my gear on. Then I'll be defiantly fast enough to escape them." Christa chewed her lip. We both knew we would keep throwing arguments at each other until one of us would win. She had her sweet character and clear mind to aid her,

I had my intellect and an edge of finesse.

"But, we have to stay at our post. If anyone found out you slipped away you'd get in trouble." I took a deep breath and put my hands on her shoulders. Here we go, time for the guilt trip. "Pleas Christa, I have to do this. I have to go out there and show them I can be useful, that I have something to attribute to mankind in this war. This is my chance, and if I don't take it now I'll have to wait for another and who knows how long it'll be before it comes. Pleas, don't take away my chance to prove myself."

Christa nervously started twirling her fingers, fighting with her own conflicted feeling. But I knew I had already won, we both knew that. "O-okay. But pleas come back okay, I don't want to live knowing I let you-" I cut her off with a quick but very genuine hug. "Thank you Christa, I promise I'll be careful." With that I stood and ran off, grabbing the rest of my gear and attaching it to my harness. I decided against putting on the box for the blades, I wasn't going to use them after all.

I got outside and used my gear to get airborne. The first few times of training I used it I had always stayed close to the ground, scared that I would fall. But by now I had learned to trust my gear and my instinct.

Luckily the stables were only a short swing away from HQ. And there, in the corner, I had hidden a little something I had been working on for a while now.

The Recon Corps was well known for it's many inventions to fight and capture titans, most of them made by Hanji. But now it would be my invention to finally make it into the official arsenal. Exited, I grabbed the tube-like object and practically dragged it out. I had been trying very hard to make it lighter, but sadly it was still a little to heavy to move around with 3DMG.

As fast as I could, with the barrel on my back, I ran around in the streets, dodging flying debris, avoiding screams and ducking into allies for cover. I had to get to a calmer place, somewhere where I could concentrate and set an ambush. Eventually I stumbled into a part of town where it was eerily quit. The screams were only a distant hum here and there was no titan in sight yet. As I looked around I noticed a little ally with some trash and toppled crates. Perfect.

I ducked in and started preparing my invention. After the gunpowder was thrown in and the cord attached I leaned the barrel down on one of the crates, aiming for the main street. And now, it was just a matter of waiting. It would be only a matter of time before a titan noticed my presence and come to find me. And when it did, I just hoped my plan would work. If it does, hunting titans and bringing them down might become a little easier for both the Garrison and the Recon Corps.

They better come quick though, or else the sun would have set and the titans would be down before I could even shoot at one. So I waited...and waited...and waited...BOOM! I shot up at the sound of a heavy footstep. It was close.

I yelped and fumbled with the barrel, aiming it at the direction from

which I heard more footsteps coming. Okay, now I just had to wait until a foot or something came into view. I noticed that my hand was shaking uncontrollably. Whether it was from fear or anticipation I had no idea, but I was thankful my weapon wasn't as light as a normal gun else it would have been impossible to aim it.

My attention was drawn by a low huff above. Oh, sh*t. My head slowly lifted upward to look up at the face off a 10 meter class. It's bulgy eyes looked down at me with mindless hunger, drool dripping from it's grinning maw. Just it's head and shoulders were peeking around the corner and it's hand started reaching down towards me.

It's feet hadn't appeared in the opening of the ally yet so there was nothing low enough for me to shoot. I should have gone deeper into the ally so there was a better chance of something coming into range but I hadn't wanted to get too deep just in case I might get trapped. Now I realized my mistake as I froze at how close the titan was.

'Nononononononodamnit! Why can't I move? Come on, RUN!' My body didn't obey my mind and all I could do was stare in shock as the large hand came closer and closer. Suddenly a roar tore through the air, shredding my eardrums to bits. I finally regained control over my muscles to reach up my arms and cover my ears, pulling the trigger on my weapon at the same time.

A loud explosion rang in my ears at the same time as a new titan's fist connected with the side of the first titan's neck, demolishing it completely an enormous foot came down in front of me, sending dust and debris flying everywhere. The combined power of the foot coming down and my weapons backlash sent me flying. I heard the whizzing and hissing of white hot metal cords flying through the air, followed by a sickening crack and the ripping off flesh.

The air was knocked out of my lungs as I hit the ground. I felt debris and a hot liquid raining down on me as the scent of blood and burned flesh filled my nostrils. I immediately curled myself up into a little ball for protection. There was another roar, this time filled with surprise and pain. Seconds later there was a violent tremor as something hit the ground with a loud 'CRASH!'. I stayed motionless on the ground, trying to figure out what was going on despite the ringing in my ears. It took me a while to identify the sound of something large dragging itself away.

I opened my eyes and saw my sleeves covered in blood, which was evaporating quickly. My eyes widened as it sunk in what that meant. I felt a grin forming on my face and stood up as quickly as I could. This turned out to be a mistake as I started seeing black dots and my ears started ringing again. No, I had to get up, I had to see if it had worked. I braced myself against the wall and started walking back towards the blood splattered entrance of the ally.

When I looked out I immediately noticed the huge carcass of a titan, the 10 meter class I guessed. Then where was the other one? I turned my head and noticed a large smear of blood on the floor. Slowly my eyes followed the trail until I saw a leg being dragged around the corner.

Yes! I hit it! And it looked like my theory might be right and if it wasn't the lack of sunlight would inhibit it's ability to heal. Now I

just had to get someone to-.

Wait a second, this part of village was closest to the forest over there. I had to get someone quickly! If it was able to get into the forest no one would believe me. I pulled out the controls of my gear and shot up into the sky.

Damn it, this was no good. Why wasn't there anyone here? When I didn't need prying eyes they were always there but when I actually wanted someone to see something they were always looking somewhere else. I hit one this time. For once I actually freakin' hi-!

I felt my blood running cold as I turned the corner and saw a form on all fours right in front of me. It's huge eyes found me after barely half a second. I heard a short noise of panic coming out of my throat as I shot up as fast as I could. Nonetheless I wobbled a little as my feet hit it's head when it leapt for me.

'No, not a crawler! Anything but a crawler!' I heard the fast thumbing of it's hands and feet on the ground as it turned around and came after me. Suddenly the sound stopped and I took a sharp turn to the right, knowing what was coming. I let out a scream of terror at the loud 'CLACK!' of teeth snapping together barely half a meter from where I was. There was a crash as it hit the building but it seemed unfazed as the thumbing started again.

Come on! I had to get out of here! I had to think of something! I had to find someone! Suddenly I noticed the sound had stopped again. How long had it stopped? With frightened eyes I dared to glance backwards.

I could feel it's scalding breath on my body. I could see it's saliva covered tongue twisting and curling in anticipation, the back of it's slimy mouth, even the powerful muscles at the entrance of it's throat. I couldn't move, terror had taken control of every muscle and even my vocal cords wouldn't work.

Suddenly the titan's enormous form went crashing down, blood spurting from the back of it's neck. At the same time I was grabbed by a small, slender form and whisked out of the maw's way. I was jerked around at an almost neck breaking speed to avoid the buildings and before I even knew it I was put on the ground.

My legs didn't seem to realize it either as I collapsed first onto my knees and then to the side. 'I'm a live. By the Walls, I'm alive!' Hyperventilating I looked up to properly thank my savior, but shut my mouth quickly. Mikasa stood next to me, staring down at me from the corner of her eyes with an emotionless glare.

My heart dropped even more however as I saw the one that killed the titan walk towards me, the Wings of Freedom bloodied but spread proudly on his back. "S-Sorry, uncle Erwin." I mumbled silently. He just silently looked at me, a slight frown on his face. Other members of his squad and the Captains of the Recon Corps landed around us, including Levi, Hanji and Mike, to see if their Commander was unharmed. He bluntly answered the blood wasn't his.

"I-I hit a titan." I mumbled, trying to get my guardian's attention. He looked back down at me, strode over and pulled me up by the back of my uniform. "One miss Lenz came to Levi telling him you went off

on your own and hadn't returned. Care to explain?" He asked in a calm voice. His arms were crossed on his chest. Not a good sign.

"I-I had this invention I wanted to test-" There were a few groans around me as I said that. "But I did actually hit a titan this time!" "And where is that titan now?" I closed my mouth for a second, looking up at the commander before I mumbled, "I think it escaped into the forest."

"Ha, that's impossible!" I looked around at Jean who had come up next to Mikasa, ignoring her glare at his closeness. "A titan will always go after a human, even if it is wounded. If you had hit the bastard it would have turned around and eaten you!" There were a few mumbles of agreement in the crowd. Having made that 'smart' statement Jean looked at Mikasa with a grin. She just looked away and off into space. What he said was true—and yet.

"Armin." I turned back to Erwin. "It was very irresponsible of you to go off on your own, we might as well have been too late to save you. The only way for us humans to survive is if we work as a team. By acting on your own could put your life and that of those around you in danger." He did not raise his voice at me, but he might as well have. I just stood there, silently hanging my head.

Erwin gave a tired sigh. "Just try not to cause too much trouble the next couple of days. I have an expedition to organize." Next he turned towards Hanji and Levi. "You two, escort him back to headquarters. Report back to me when he's safe." I heard Hanji moaning in protest while Levi grabbed my arm and pushed me to walk in front of him.

I shrank together at the feeling of prying eyes and peeked back at the spectators from underneath my bangs. Behind me I heard Levi silently say, "I'll talk with you tomorrow, Ackerman." This made me frown a little. Did she do something wrong? I had no time to ask however as I felt Hanji put a hand between my shoulder blades and push me forward. "Come on you little delinquent, march!" They said in a cheerful tone.

The walk to headquarters was mostly quiet. But for some reason, I don't remember who started it (probably Hanji), we had started talking again.

"So since Hercules could stop the hydra from regenerating and according to your notes your experiments had shown burn marks heal extremely slowly, I thought we might be able to cripple a titan by burning its wound close right after it's inflicted." I finished explaining.

Hanji took her finger from underneath their chin and grinned. "Now that theory isn't too crazy Armin, maybe it might even work." "Stop encouraging the boy to do stupid things Shitty-Glass." Levi scolded the part time scientist. It might have sounded more like a statement to most, but I knew Levi a little better than most by now. "Armin, what Erwin said is true. It's dangerous and reckless to attack, let alone experiment on a titan all on your own."

Hanji let out a mock gasp. "Did you just use his first name?" I couldn't help but grin, I had noticed too. "Were you worried about me? How sweet!" My grin disappeared however at the shorter male's

glare. "I'm serious Arlert. If Erwin hadn't been there in time you would have become a titan's toothpick. And also thank the Walls for Ackerman and her stubbornness strong enough to defy my direct orders."

"Mikasa **chose** to save me?" I wondered. She had actually decided for herself to come to my aid? "Armin, the girl is a saint and savior with blood on her hands. What would you expect?" Hanji replied with a shrug. "Yeah." I mumbled, once again feeling humbled by that girl. "I would expect that from her. And I would expect you guys to come save me too, since we spend time together quit regularly." I heard a huff and a small laugh behind me. "But I don't understand why Erwin would come and save me."

The footsteps behind me stopped momentarily, but I just kept on ranting. "He would be better off without me. I talk when I should just shut up, I always get myself and thereby also him into trouble, I take up space and food. I'm more of a burden than anything else." I heard the footsteps speeding up to catch up with me again. "Armin! Don't think like that!" Hanji scolded.

"I mean, we're not even really family. Why would the guy even care about me?" "Because he promised your grandfather to take care of you." Hanji answered, trying to cheer me up. "Oh yeah just great." I mumbled before raising my voice a little and changing it to copy Erwin's, also mimicking his posture. "Excuse me, old man. I'm afraid you brought me the wrong apprentice. I demanded a tall, muscular young man with talent, a radiance of confidence and leadership on the side. This here, this is just another burden to take care of."

I heard a loud shrieking behind me and turned to see Hanji doubled over and laughing like a maniac. "Oh my Walls Armin," She was able to wheeze out. "Can I please cut your hair?! If you do that again we can make everyone believe the Commander shrunk!" Immediately after those words she fell over and kept on laughing.

"Listen Arlert." Levi addressed me. "It's not necessarily the way you look or what you can not do that bothers him. It's just your personality that drives him insane." I made a face at that statement. "Wow, that really helps." I grumbled, grabbing the doorknob. "Now Armin," Hanji interjected, finally having gained control over her laughter again. "He just means: Why do you wanna be in the Recon Corps? You might be a far better strategist for the Garrison."

"Because I want to be of use to humanity, I want to get out there and contribute something to our struggle." 'I want to see the world out there.' I added mentally as my hand gripped the doorknob even harder. I turned a little to look back at my superiors. "I just want to be like you guys." And with that I walked in and closed the door behind me.

As soon as I heard the click I pushed my back to the wood and listened. As soon as I heard the disappearing footsteps I ran towards the supply closet to refill my gas and equip myself with blades. If I wanted to catch that titan I had to find it before dawn. I didn't have much time.

****Ah yes, I forgot to mention last time. There are actually more of these AU's with HTTYD only most of the time Levi plays the role of Hiccup. And the first time I read one of those I thought: 'Sweet, but Levi is the absolute WORST person to put in Hiccup's place. Armin would be much better. They're both small, considered weaker than the others, very smart and inventive, are absolutely adorable, can be badass when they have to or have some confidence, have a friend that is/was considered humanities enemy, another (girl)friend that is completely badass,â€|.Let's do this! '****

****So why didn't you? ****

A long time ago, when the human race only just started retreating behind the walls, a sinkhole had caused the left back corner of Trost to collapse downward. The walls miraculously survived (giving the Wallists another excuse to say the walls were divine) but people were still afraid to live there. The result was that the hole and the area around it were covered by a thick forest. The Trainee and Recon Corps sometimes used it as a Manoeuvring Gear training ground. Now though it was as good as abandoned.

First I had scouted the edge of the forest, but it had quickly become clear that the titan had decided to hide itself deeper in. So now I was swinging around between the trees, trying to find the behemoth with just the light that the moon provided.

I was slowly growing more frustrated. Had I really just imagined I hit it? Had it just been wishful thinking? Had it been a hallucination caused by the heat? Or a misjudgement of the situation?

No, it couldn't be. I had felt the titan's blood. I had heard it's cry of pain. I had SEEN it drag itself away! It must be somewhere around here.

I was so preoccupied by my thoughts that I was taken off guard when I saw two bright dots shining in the dark. I gave a yelp in surprise and almost slammed into a tree. I was able to catch myself in time however, setting my feet against the trunk and using a wire to keep me upright.

I looked back behind me, peering into the darkness. And sure enough, there it was. Two large, fright green orbs glowing in the distance. Both excitement and fear shot through my body like a lightning strike. Was that the titan?

I carefully dislodged my hooks and started to swing closer. I hid behind every tree I encored myself to and just let my momentum carry me closer, so the only sign of my presence were soft 'whoosh's. Arriving at the last tree between me and the creature, I stopped, took a deep breath and draw a pair of blades from my hips. After taking another moment to compose myself I slowly looked past the edge of the tree and gasped.

This creature was downright grotesque. It was defiantly a 15 meter class seated against that tree. It seemed to have a tan skin, but a closer look revealed a network of red and bleu veins underneath skin that seemed to be littered with bleu and yellow bruises in some spots. It had a huge bulky body with wiry muscles that were both

terrifying and kind of enviable. On top of his head he had long, shaggy, brown-ish hair that even though it hung in its face it didn't obscure its exposed, lipless mouth—or the enormous, glowing green eyes.

I jumped a little as I realized those eyes were staring straight at me. As soon as the titan saw this it tried to move. It could barely even get its hand off the ground however. I relaxed a little as I guessed it had 'shut down', as Hanji called it, because of the lack of sunlight. Satisfied that the titan was in absolutely no condition to defend itself I swung over to its side.

The 'Burning Bola' was still wrapping its legs together, cutting about half way through one of them. I cursed softly. I had spent so much time calculating how thick the rope had to be not to break and the weight needed to make it still able to cut and break a titan's legs. I scrunched up my nose at the scent of burned flesh. Well at least it had largely immobilized this one, I could always go back over my notes later, after I had killed this thing.

I took some time to study my target: The nape of its neck. There were thick muscles laced on top of it, so I was gonna have to take quite a run-up to gain enough force to cut through. And once I was done I could take a lock with me as proof. No, that would rot away too quickly. A bone then, a finger phalanx maybe? If I hurried I might be back in time to show it to someone. Slowly I stretched my muscles to get ready and rotated my shoulders a few times, causing the blades to cling lightly. A soft, whimpering moan came from the titan and I looked up to see it was looking straight at me.

I looked straight back and it took me a moment to realize that I was trapped. There was no physical or supernatural force holding me back, but those eyes! I felt shivers crawling up my spine and desperately wanted to look away, but I couldn't.

Those enormous, green, glowing, menacing and absolutely terrified eyes. Never before I had seen such expressive eyes in humans, let alone titans. I had looked into titans' eyes before. Titans about to eat a man, titans that were going to die, Titans that had been trapped and experimented on. Titans did not know fear or the concept of self-preservation, only hunger.

But these eyes, looking back at me, were filled to the brim with fear, a silent plea for its life. Like a kicked animal, wondering what it had done wrong.

I gritted my teeth and tightened the grip on my blade. Those bastards had done more to us than wrong. They had slaughtered us. They had driven us back and trapped us in walls. They took our freedom. And even now that wasn't enough! They were still killing, still taking everything from us! And for what? For food? No, they didn't need to eat! For fun? No! They couldn't feel fun or pleasure or anything of that kind! Those bastards did it just because. For no reason at all! Stupid, huge, useless pieces of—!

Useless.

My rage stopped at that. How many times had I looked up at a titan with fear in my eyes? How many times had I been overcome with the sheer terror of knowing that these things would kill me, no matter

how much I would beg? Was that the same terror this titan was feeling right now?

My arms started shaking. 'Oh, great job Arlert, you freakin' idiot! Now you really aren't going to be able to kill it!' I tried a few more times to steel myself, to get myself into motion so I could kill it. But it was too late. I sympathized with a titan.

I turned with a slight swish and shot away through the trees. As I did guilt spread through my brain like a poison. 'Yeah, so heroic! You can't kill a titan so you're just gonna leave it there, probably for the rest of all eternity. Oh you're just too good.' A sarcastic inner voice was taunting me, gnawing at the front of my head. With an agitated huff I landed on a branch and pressed my hands, handles still in them, to my head in an attempt to make it go away. Hesitantly I looked back. Big mistake.

The titan had its head bent down, exposing the back of its neck and waiting for what it thought was the inevitable. I started shaking even harder, tears running down my face as common sense fought with morals. Come on it was just a titan! A huge, scary monster that thirsted for human blood. With the most human eyes and understandable dread in his mind.

Before I could even properly think my plan through I jumped off the branch, made a 180-degree turn and shot back at the creature at full speed. As I came back within its hearing range I saw it shrink together even more. With that last look I averted my eyes from its face and concentrated on what I had to do.

As soon as I was close enough I slowed myself down enough to hit the ground running and made a beeline for its legs. I quickly found one end of the metal wires and started unscrewing it from the lead weight. The titan sat absolutely still, but I worked quickly. I'd rather not risk giving it enough time to gain some strength and attack me. Grabbing the end of the wire in my hands I started running around the legs, untying them. I flinched a few times as one of them moved a little, not being held into place anymore.

All went pretty smoothly, until I got to the part of it that was still stuck into the titan's flesh. I couldn't get that out. The now putrid stench of burned flesh and sight of said wounds made me almost wanna throw up in disgust. But I collected whatever wits I still had left, put one of my boots against the giant foot and started pulling with all my might. The rope wouldn't budge.

"Come on, come!" I hissed through my teeth as I threw my head back and put all my weight into the pulling. As I did however I felt my heart stop and my blood run cold. There was a large shadow looming over me.

Before I could properly process what was going on. The titan's hand came crushing down right on top of me. The wind was knocked out of my lungs as I was pressed down, the full weight of the titan's hand holding me to the ground.

I gasped for breath, already starting to panic. I desperately wiggled underneath the hand but couldn't move an inch. I did however hear the titan huff as one of its fingers moved a little bit. I looked up at its face. Its nose was scrunching slightly and even though it

didn't have lips I could see the corners of it's mouth slightly twitching up. Oh great, just great, my struggles were just tickling it!

With a huff of desperation I just let myself drop limp. 'This is it.' I thought 'This is then end.' Goddesses I'm such an idiot! I should have just untangled it's legs, ran and let it pull the rope out itself. Or better, I should have left it here. Now it can get to Trost and attack from within!

I let out a whimper at that thought. Now I was going to be the kid that in his weakness brought forth the fall of Trost. Or no. I pressed my face to the ground as another thought passed through my mind. No one knew where I went. For all they know I was the kid that ran out of gas and died in the woods, chasing an illusive titan.

I felt tears starting to sting in my eyes. Useless, I had been absolutely useless! Now I couldn't return Hanji's borrowed notes back to her. Levi would have one person less to help cleaning. And I would also never have done something useful for humanity, for the Corps, for Erwin, nothing to repay him for all those years they took care of me. Would they even miss me? Maybe Christa, Hanji and Levi would. The others might probably even be happy I was out of their hair.

I let out a soft sob. Large fingers shifted slightly on top of me at the sound, but I ignored it. I just kept on sobbing, thinking back of any happy memories I could find. My parents, my grandfather, my long lost book about the outside world, conversations with Christa. At every single one however I flinched because of the less pleasant memories connected to them. Lost lives, missed opportunities, unfulfilled dreams. Stop it! Positive memories think only of the good things now you still can!

So I just lay there with closed eyes, grasping to vague pictures and words, completely shut off from the rest of the world. It seemed only a few minutes, could have been hours, until there was a brighter light hitting my eyelids. Slowly I cracked one open to see the first sunrays peeking just over the horizon. Above me I could hear the titan taking a deep breath. 'Well, at least I got to watch the dawn one last time.' I thought bitterly.

There was a long, deep sigh, and then the huge fingers started closing around me.

I started shaking violently and tears appeared in my eyes all over again as the hand with a vice like grip started lifting me up. 'So I was going out as a cry-baby. At least there was no one here to see it.' The titan turned it's hand a little so we were face to face. 'Well, no one except you.'

I snivelled again softly and met those gigantic green eyes. They seemed surprisingly calm—soft even. Maybe it knew how afraid I was, just like he had been before. Maybe, just maybe it might fulfil just one last request. After all, I didn't really want to bleed or burn to death. Still looking into those green orbs I took a shaky breath and pleaded in a quit, broken voice: "Please make it quick."

Not a second after those words had left my mouth, the titan opened his own wide. I got a good look at those menacing teeth and even the strong muscles at the entrance of it's oesophagus. Fear shot through

my body like a lightning bolt, paralyzing me on the spot. Time seemed to slow down as I seemed to be brought closer and closer. And suddenly there was this unbearable heat.

Everything was just gone and there was this heat and my eyes were stinging because of the hot steam that was blown straight into my face. I felt I was being moved pretty fast so I started panicking until there was this short drop. I gasped for the breath that the impact had knocked out of my lungs as I tried to figure out what had happened.

Was I dead? Had I been eaten alive? Was that drop me falling into it's stomach? I turned my head around and felt around in an attempt to figure out what I was lying on. I felt relief and confusion flood over me at the sensation of moss and dirt. I was completely when but since it didn't feel slimy it was probably just condense. So wait, I'm alive?

Suddenly there was this loud crash and the ground shook violently underneath me. Oh Goddesses I'm dead! I rolled onto my side and threw my hands over my head. I had no idea what was happening. Why did the titan drop me? What happened? Where am I? What day? How? Who? What?

Numbness.

My eyes saw only dark blurs and my ears were filled with white noise. It offered rest and I needed it, so I gave into it.

(Linebreak)

Something tickled against my face. Something wet and cold, though it seemed to turn warm after every half a second. What? What couldâ€¦TITAN! I shot up and scrambled backwards, only to be just in time to see my 'attacker' flee back into the woods.

A deer?

How did it get so close to me? Is it just me or is the sky brighter than a second ago? I slowly turned over and was almost blinded by the sun, which was indeed higher than-

I shot immediately back to alert, looking around for the titan. It was gone. All that remained were trees with the bark scratched off, some places with turned earth and the lead weight of my bola that I had detached.

It's gone? But where? How? How was I still alive? Why was I alive? Never had a titan willingly dropped a human?

As I slowly got up I felt a sharp pain shoot through my ribcage. I lifted my shirt to see what was wrong and my eyes widened at the sight of dark bruises. Guess in my panic I didn't really feel how tight the titan's grip was.

As more and more details about the world around me started becoming clearer I jumped for the so manyth time that day. Oh no, it was Tuesday! If I didn't get back to HQ to help cleaning Levi was gonna be the one to kill me!

Grasping to that thought to help me get over the previous shocks I picked myself up, chucked my gear and sped off back to Trost.

(Linebreak)

Tired. Need rest. Bandages. Down pillows.

"Oi brat!"

I stood up straight and saluted, kicking my bucket (luckily not figuratively although) in the process. The lukewarm dirty water poured out all over the floor that I had just cleaned and I went completely rigid, fearing my superior's wrath.

Levi stood there, looking at the spilled liquid filth. I swore I saw his eye twitch, but I couldn't tell because of his passive expression. Slowly he lifted his eyes to my face. I felt dread creeping up my spine and I was just about ready to apologize and duck down to scrub the floor until my hands bled when Levi spoke in a soft, emotionless voice. "You were mumbling to your mob."

"Uhm, whut?" I wondered, looking at said object in my hands.

Levi lifted a slender eyebrow. "Have you even fucking slept at all? You look just as bat-shit crazy as shity-glass after they pulled an all-nighter." His voice stayed monotone, but I could swear I saw a tiny hint of worry flit across his face. Maybe it was just the sleep deprivation.

I nervously pressed my lips together. I had gotten back just in time before anyone noticed I was gone, so I decided to just keep what happened to myself. No one would believe me anyway, they probably would think it was a hallucination caused by the lack of sleep. Now if he could only convince that to himself.

Instead I just slowly shook my head. Levi stalked forward with just a few large paces and snatched the cleaning utility from my hands. He turned back to the entrance. "Petra! Oluo!" Said Scouts from Levi's squad peeked their heads inside. "You two take over from Arlert here."

He turned back to me and poked the mob handle at my chest. "You go straight to bed and sleep. You are of no use to me in this state." My shoulders dropped. Sure I was relieved I could get some sleep, but now I was even useless at this. I hung my head and started dragging my feet to the door when I heard Levi add: "Plus you guys are having your first training tomorrow, and I don't want to deal with a half sleeping recruit."

WHAT?! I swirled back around to see the 3 adults in the room staring at me. Ow, I guess I said that out loud. "We talked to Erwin before he left for another expedition and he agreed to let you join the trainees for the Recon Corps."

Panic was the only way to describe my state of mind. 'But what if we bumped into titans? What if I hesitated again? And then I might get killed or get in the way of someone else or what if I helped it just like this night or I let it through the defences or- ' It took me

every ounce of self control not to show my freak-out. Instead I just let out a high, squeaky: "Do I have to?" This time it was Oluo answering. "You're already signed up, there is no going back." Unknowing to the man that sentence sent another wave of panic through me.

"But â€"uhm- E-Erwin himself said I wasn't fit to fight titans. Can't I just skip fighting the titans and drive one of the supply carts, or strategize somewhere in the back like Hanji said?" "If you had gone with the Garrison Like Hanji said that would indeed be able to do that. You are with the Recon Corps however and every single one of us has to be ready to and WILL fight a titan at some point."
"B-but-"

"Armin," I was startled out of my panic attack by Petra's soft voice. "I know you're scared, all of us are. But we already lost Wall Maria. With the regular attacks on Trost it's only a matter of time before the get to Rose, and when that happens we have to be ready to defend ourselves."

"And that is why you are going to bed right now. I don't want you dying because of inattention." Saying that Levi walked up to me and pushed me out the door.

The walk to my room was filled with worrying and fear. As I changed into my nightwear I was wondering how I was possibly going to get to sleep. I lay awake for a few minutes before my body finally seemed to realize what I had been through and slowly lulled itself into a deep but uneasy sleep.

**Also, to the guest who was wondering weather this was abandoned:
Nope!**

End
file.